

**AICO Contract Cheating Sub-Committee Report** 

A presentation by members of the AICO executive ICAI, Canadian Consortium
Thursday, March 7, 2019



#### Video

"Degrees For Sale: Inside The Essay Writing Industry: Students On The Edge"

- Source:
- Creator: BBC 3
- Title: Degrees For Sale: Inside The Essay Writing Industry: Students On The Edge"
- Posting Date: September 20, 2018
- Retrieved from:
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOSVW8rGZTk&feature=youtu.
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### Topics:

- Who is AICO?
- AICO, Sub-Committee on Contract Cheating
- Approach, Goals and the Action Plan
- Next Steps
- Invite Feedback



#### Who is AICO?

- Academic Integrity Council of Ontario
- Formed in 2008; by-laws 2013
- University and College membership (30+)
- As a council we:
  - share and promote academic integrity best practices;
  - collaborate on professional development;
  - discuss current issues and concerns;
  - share information, research and knowledge;
  - meet 1 to 2 times per year.



# Contract Cheating Sub-Committee

- Define: Contract Cheating
- At the Fall 2017 AICO meeting, hosted by Ryerson University, Chris Lang, Director, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances (University of Toronto), delivered a key-note about contract cheating.
- The Sub-Committee on Contract Cheating was formed as a result of the call to action from Mr. Lang's presentation.
- The Sub-committee has been meeting regularly to develop and gain endorsement of an Action Plan, which we share with you today.



### Sub-Committee Membership

- Andrea Ridgley, Academic Integrity Specialist, Ryerson University; AICO Co-Chair
- Angela Clark, Academic Integrity Facilitator, Sheridan College; AICO Secretary/Outreach Coordinator
- Emma Thacker, Manager, Academic Quality Assurance, Durham College; AICO Co-Chair
- John Paul Foxe, Director, Academic Integrity Office, Ryerson University
- Kim Mason, Academic Integrity Officer, McMaster University
- Amanda McKenzie, Director, Quality Assurance, University of Waterloo; Secretary, ICAI
- Jennie Miron, Professor, Bachelor of Nursing Program, Humber College
- Nagina Parmar, Faculty, Ryerson University
- Cebert Adamson, Dean, Continuing Education, Academic Quality and Centre for Teaching and Learning, Mohawk College, AICO College Liaison
- Special Advisors: Mr. Chris Lang and Dr. Tricia Bertram Gallant, Director, Academic Integrity Office, University of California San Diego; ICAI, Advisory Board Member

#### What are the concerns?

- Students who rely on contract cheating providers are at **risk of a skill and knowledge deficit** upon graduation, as they have bypassed some learning.
- Contract cheating providers are exploiting students in increasingly sophisticated ways. Marketing strategies specifically target students with promises of properly referenced papers, original work, passing grades and expert, discipline specific writing.
- Services are widely advertised and increasingly persistent and persuasive, influencing students to rationalize the purchase of an assessment (Rowland, 2017).



#### ... the concerns?

- There are instances of students who engage in contract cheating being blackmailed. Contract cheating providers threaten to expose the student to the college/university, unless additional payments are made (Lancaster, 2016), adding an additional layer of risk to students.
- Students who engage in contract cheating are provided with an unfair academic advantage over their peers.
- Commissioned work is often difficult to detect and hence, document for evidence.



#### ... the concerns?

- Contract cheating contributes to a culture of academic dishonesty.
   There is a growing concern that contract cheating damages the value of credentials and reputation of institutions.
- Contract cheating causes reputational harm to academic institutions. A scandal in Australia prompted the federal government to intervene and manage Australia's higher education reputation (Harrison, 2014).
- It is challenging to seek prosecution of contract cheating providers, as it is not illegal in many countries, including Canada.
- Canada is lagging behind, with a response to this issue.



#### Goals

- The AICO Contract Cheating Sub-Committee has developed an Action Plan which aims to work collaboratively to reduce the threat of contract cheating.
- The Action Plan was presented to AICO members for feedback, discussion and endorsement on November 17, 2018.



#### Goals



- The Action Plan is broad in scope to engage ALL stakeholders:
  - Universities, colleges, students, family, staff, faculty, administration, external associations, researchers ...
- AICO intends to align itself with the growing international movement to reduce the threat of contract cheating.
- The Action Plan has 5 items, as follows:

### Action Plan Item #1 (of 5)



 Raise awareness about contract cheating within all constituencies of our member institutions (e.g. students, administration, families, staff, faculty);

## Action Plan Item #2 (of 5)



- Raise awareness about contract cheating with relevant provincial and national education stakeholders, such as:
  - Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario;
  - Council of Ontario Universities;
  - Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council);
  - Canadian Association of Graduate Studies;
  - Colleges Ontario;
  - Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities;
  - Universities Canada;
  - Colleges and Institutes Canada.
    - There are others!

### Action Plan Item #3 (of 5)



- Develop and share contract cheating reduction strategies
- (e.g.: develop guidelines / best practices, engage in research)

### Action Plan Item #4 (of 5)

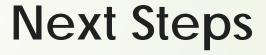


 Advocate for legislation to offer a legal pathway to prosecute contract cheating providers.

### Action Plan Item #5 (of 5)



- Engage with international stakeholders to work collaboratively on initiatives and build international capacity.
- Stakeholders such as:
  - International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI)
  - Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
  - European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI)





- Strategize! Prioritize! Collaborate!
  - Briefing note created to raise awareness
  - Request for contract cheating-related material from members
  - Compile a resource package
  - Approach relevant education stakeholders
- We welcome your feedback and questions!



Thank you!

AICO website:

https://academicintegritycouncilofontario .wordpress.com/



AICO Twitter: @AICOIntegrity



#### References

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